

The Great Reversal

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[0 : 00] All right, we're picking up where we left off last week in Luke's Gospel. And last Sunday, we heard about how Jesus chose 12 of his disciples to be his apostles.

And we talked about what that will mean. It means that they're going to be sent out as representatives of Jesus with a message. And we looked at that list of the 12 apostles, and we saw how Jesus came down with them from the mountain to a level place where there was this large crowd waiting.

And there was a crowd of his disciples, but also people from all over. And we read about how power was coming from Jesus and healing everybody who touched him and even casting demons out of people.

It was really exciting. And then immediately following this, Jesus begins to speak. Looking at his disciples, he said, And then what follows here is a lengthier teaching of Jesus, which spans the rest of this chapter.

We're just going to take a quick bird's eye view of the chapter to get a sense of what's in it. From verse 20 to 23, there are these blessing statements. And then following those, there are warning statements or woe statements, 24 to 26.

[1 : 20] Then from 27 to 36, we have Jesus teaching about love for our enemies. Then in 37 to 42, teaching about judging others.

And then in verses 43 to 49, Jesus wraps it up with these two analogies or illustrations of fruit trees and home building.

About how to discern good from bad in others. And an illustration which shows us the wise versus the foolish life.

Now we're going to take our time to go through all of this slowly, not all today. But I wanted us to have a quick overview of what Jesus taught on this occasion. And if you've read the Gospel of Matthew, you'll notice that there's some major similarities to Jesus' sermon on the mount. Which can be found in Matthew chapter 5 to 7. In fact, the similarities here are so strong that many view this account here in Luke as the same sermon.

[2 : 22] With Luke here giving us a sort of condensed version. We notice that the sermon is directed at Jesus' disciples. In both Matthew and Luke.

We notice in both cases that the sermon begins with these statements of blessing. Almost everything found here in Luke is found in Matthew's account.

And in the same order. And then the sermon ends the same way in both Gospels. With the analogy of the wise and foolish builders. And so there's many similarities.

On the other hand, some feel quite strongly that this sermon in Luke was a different sermon which Jesus shared. And they note some of the differences. The sermon on the mount seems to have been shared up on a mountainside.

But Luke says that this sermon was given after Jesus came down from the mountain at a level place. Some have even gone so far as to nickname this sermon in Luke as the sermon on the plain.

[3 : 28] Any similarities, they say, are owing to the fact that Jesus likely taught and said the same things more than once. And in many different places.

Well, maybe we can hold off on a decision until we've carefully studied and examined what Jesus said on this occasion in its entirety. So let's just press into these words of Jesus now.

And hear for ourselves what the crowds traveled so far to hear. Looking at his disciples, Jesus said, Blessed are you who weep now.

For you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you. When they exclude you. And insult you.

And reject your name as evil. Because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day. And leap for joy. Because great is your reward in heaven.

[4 : 44] For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets. But woe to you who are rich. For you have already received your comfort.

Woe to you who are well fed now. For you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now. For you will mourn and weep.

Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you. For that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets. These are challenging words of Jesus to interpret.

Jesus speaks a series of brief, potent one-liners. Statements. And let's just notice some of the observable features of it.

The form of these words. We notice the repetition. The first four statements. Blessed are you. Blessed are you. Blessed are you.

[5 : 51] We notice that following each statement of blessing is another statement. For yours. For you. For you. We also notice the contrast between the...

Each line of these statements. Blessed are you who are poor. For yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now.

For you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now. For you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you.

When they exclude you. And insult you. And reject your name as evil. And then the contrast.

Because great is your reward. In heaven. So there's this massive contrast between how things are now for some.

And how they will finally end up. Maybe another way to say it. Jesus is telling of how there will someday be a great reversal. A day when those who had nothing will have everything.

[7 : 01] A day when those who hungered will be satisfied. A day when those who were weeping are laughing and rejoicing. A day when those who were mocked and persecuted because of their faith in him.

Will be honored and rewarded because of their faith in him. We also notice one of the differences between Jesus' sermon and the mount.

And Matthew's gospel and this sermon. Matthew records that Jesus made nine of these statements. Luke only includes four. And in different order.

But maybe what's most surprising here in Luke's account of this sermon. Is the parallel statements of warning. Or woe. That Matthew doesn't have in his account. And these are also very similar in form to the statements of blessing.

Let's just look at them for a moment here. Woe to you. Woe to you. Woe to you. We see the repetition again. Following each statement of warning or woe.

[8 : 07] We see the parallel statement. For you. For you. For you. And an outcome or a result. And again we notice the contrast in each statement.

Woe to you who are rich. For you've already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed. For you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now.

For you will mourn and weep. Notice the clear parallel between the blessings and the woes. This is not formatted very nicely.

But you can see if you put the list side by side. The first blessing statement is blessed are you who are poor. And the first woe statement.

Woe to you who are rich. Blessed are you who hunger. But woe to you who are well fed. Blessed are you who weep. But woe to you who laugh.

[9 : 10] Blessed are you when people insult you. But woe to you when everyone speaks well of you. So this is really obvious and deliberate contrast between how things are right now for some.

And how things will finally end up. And we see not only is a great reversal coming for those who seemingly are going through a really tough situation right now.

But there's a great reversal coming for those who seemingly have it made right now. A day when those who had everything will lose it all. A day when those who are well fed will be hungry.

A day when those who laughed will weep. And a day when those who were spoken well of will have no reward. But will face God's judgment like the false prophets of old did.

And so as we look at the form of these statements and the contrasting features and the logic and the flow of them. I hope what Jesus is getting at is starting to come clear. Let's see if we can dial in

the focus even a little more.

[10:20] And look at two of these key words. The word blessed and the word woe. Let's start with blessed. We should know that Jesus is not the first person to utter statements of blessing like this.

There are blessing statements like this in the Old Testament as well. For time's sake we're not going to go back and look at them. But they're there. Especially in the Psalms and Proverbs. God has spoken like this before. Brief statements of blessing. And then that second statement of what that blessing will look like.

And we should also know that for someone to be blessed in the Bible. Does not simply mean that they have good fortune. Or luck. To be blessed in the Bible is a thing that comes. In relationship to God. He is the one that blesses people. To be blessed speaks of enjoying the grace of God.

[11:26] The favor of God. The gift. The gifts of God. To be blessed means to be on the receiving end of his kindness. Or his mercy.

It doesn't just mean to have good fortune or luck. It means to have good come to us. Specifically from God. And as we'll see in a moment. That grace from God is not necessarily material. In nature. This has kind of become baked into Christian culture a little bit. And into our language in our generation. That to be blessed means to have an abundance of material things.

Well certainly the good material things that we have. Are gifts of God's favor. But there are a good many ways we can be blessed by God. Apart from material things.

And in fact Jesus is later going to say in this very gospel. Watch out. Be on your guard against all kinds of greed. Life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.

[12:29] And so God's blessing in our lives should not simply be equated with material prosperity. Next let's consider that word woe. It's maybe not one that we use often today.

But maybe we've still heard it in literature or different things. Woe was also a kind of statement that was made frequently in the Old Testament.

And it was common among the prophets to utter words of woe. They're like words of warning.

Here's an example from the prophet Jeremiah chapter 23 verses 1 and 2.

Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture declares the Lord. And therefore this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people.

Because you have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow punishment on you for the evil you have done, declares the Lord.

[13:32] So this word woe means that there's trouble ahead for you. It's an ominous word. It's a word of warning, of danger or disaster or in this case punishment from God that's coming, that's just on the horizon.

And then we see also the statements which follow and explain how things are about to take a turn for the worse. Woe to you who are rich, for your time is coming to go without comfort.

Your time is coming to go hungry, to weep. And this sort of brings us to this big question that we need to ask, I think, to understand and apply these words.

Who is Jesus talking to as he says these things? These statements of blessing and these statements of woe. Who is he talking to with these words?

Well, let's look back up to verse 20. It says, looking at his disciples, he said, blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

[14:42] So right off the bat, Jesus is talking to his followers, his disciples. And this is important, I think, because their faith in him is the context for these blessings.

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. This doesn't mean that all poor people will inherit the kingdom of God just because they're poor.

Poverty is not a condition for entrance to the kingdom of God. And it's not something that automatically qualifies us for the kingdom of God.

The teaching of Jesus is really clear in all the other places and things that he said. We obtain citizenship in the kingdom of God. By faith.

By believing in Jesus. By humbling ourselves before God in repentance and confessing from the heart that Jesus is our Lord and our Savior.

[15:46] So for all of these blessings, true faith in Jesus, it's assumed to be there. He's speaking to his disciples. And if we look at that fourth statement of blessing, I think it really makes it clear there

in verse 22.

It's sort of an example of how we're to interpret these statements of blessing. Look at how Jesus explains the statement of blessing. He says, blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you, and reject your name as evil because of the Son of Man.

The Son of Man is Jesus. Jesus is referring to himself as he often does by this title. He's saying, you're blessed when people treat you poorly in all these ways because of your connection.

To me. And so when we come down to verse 23, it makes sense. The blessing, the reward in heaven is given to people because they endured the scorn and insult and persecution because of their faith in Jesus.

And so that context, that connection to Jesus, it's assumed through all of these blessing statements. To say it differently, none of these blessings come to those who are merely poor, hungry, weeping, or persecuted.

[17:20] Rather, these blessings speak of the future promised to those who have faith in Jesus. And they're meant to encourage us, though for now we may face hardship.

We may face poverty, hunger, sorrow, or ridicule. And so Jesus is talking to his disciples with these statements of blessing.

To those who have put their faith in the Son of Man. But then comes the woe statements. And of course with the woe statements, the outcomes for these people, the final outcome, is the complete opposite to the statements of blessing.

And so it would seem that with the woes, Jesus is speaking to those in the crowd who are not truly his disciples. Perhaps those who find Jesus interesting and are just along for the ride.

Perhaps those who want the miracle of healing but lack true faith in Jesus. Perhaps there are those who are following him around now, but later on they'll just leave off of that.

[18:30] And when things get tough, as Jesus begins to come into the crosshairs, they'll suddenly fade into the background and disappear. As I mentioned last week, there were many among the disciples of Jesus who turned away from following him.

We read about that in John's Gospel. Even of the twelve, there was Judas. He valued riches. He valued comfort.

He valued this favorable relationship with the religious leaders more than Jesus. And so I think these words of woe are directed to all in the crowd who are like Judas.

Who lack true faith. And who will prioritize wealth and comfort and pleasure and popularity. These are words of solemn warning about what will happen to them in the end.

If they do not truly repent and embrace Jesus for who he is. So that's kind of the interpretive framework from the context. We understand what the blessing and woe mean.

[19:39] We know who Jesus is talking to with each of these series of statements. And now we can kind of make sense of them and apply them. And so let's just take each of these one at a time and just reflect on them briefly.

Starting with the first one. Blessed are you who are poor. For yours is the kingdom of God. When might this be an encouragement to a follower of Jesus?

Poverty can be found in the life of a believer for many different reasons. It could be that a person was poor and had nothing when they first believed in Jesus.

Or it could be owing to natural disaster. Or wars. Or drought. Or high cost of living in a certain place. Could be due to circumstances that are beyond our control.

It could be in a situation that a follower of Jesus is working hard. And yet remains poor through no fault of their own.

[20:41] It could be that poverty arises because of persecution. Or poor treatment. Maybe they're pushed out of the company because of their faith.

Or it could simply be because a follower of Jesus is not primarily focused. On getting wealthy. Making money. Being successful. Obtaining these materialistic goals.

Rather than instead they just may be focused on serving the needy. On giving generously. There's lots of different reasons why a true disciple of Jesus may have little in this world.

But. But. Says Jesus. How much we have in this world is not an indication of our status with God. Though you as a disciple of Jesus may have nothing.

You are blessed. Because yours is the kingdom of God. And that is worth immeasurably more than all the riches of this world.

[21 : 43] Combined. And. Now of course the full enjoyment of this kingdom awaits. The future. When the king returns. But for now the world around us.

They may think of you as poor. As a nobody. But in reality you have the greatest inheritance this world has ever seen. Coming to you.

Now. And so count yourselves blessed. Even now. Jesus is saying. You're believing in me. You're following me. Now as my disciple.

Qualifies you. For the kingdom of God. And so you are truly blessed. Blessed are you who. Hunger now.

For you will be satisfied. In some ways it's just a restatement of the first one. Hunger. And poverty are almost synonymous. But notice the blessing promised.

[22 : 42] He says. For you will be satisfied. As a follower of Jesus. There's all kinds of things that we may long for in this world. And in this life. Even good things that we need.

Food. Clothing. A reliable vehicle. Peace in our land. Or in our relationships with others. Property. To call our own. A home. What do you hunger for now? What is it that you most long for?

In your heart of hearts? The declaration of Jesus to his followers. Is that we are blessed. Because though we may hunger and long for things now.

One day we will be satisfied. All of our longings will be met. We will hunger. We will long no more.

[23 : 40] The third one. Blessed are you who weep now. For you will laugh. As with poverty.

There are many reasons why a follower of Jesus may weep now. And be filled with sorrow. Is there a reason in your life right now. That you are weeping.

If not outwardly. Then inwardly. There are things like injuries. Lifelong debilitating conditions.

The death of loved ones. Broken relationships. There are the sinful and foolish choices that we see loved ones making.

And the devastating consequences of those choices in their lives. There are evil people in our world who are preying upon the weak. There are wars. There is the hatred and insults of others who are unkind to us.

[24 : 43] Just to get a laugh from their friends. There are many reasons why a follower of Jesus may weep now. Some owing to our faith in Jesus.

And some not. But the declaration of Jesus to his followers. Is that we are blessed. Because though we may weep now. One day our weeping.

Will be turned to joy. We will laugh. We will know that feeling of joy and happiness. That spills out so easily and freely as laughter does.

The things which cause sorrow will be gone. Jesus is talking of course about the blessing of our final home. The heavenly kingdom.

And our time with him. Forever. Much later on. Jesus will give a vision. To his apostle John. To share with us a glimpse of what heaven will be like.

[25 : 47] And I won't read the whole passage. It speaks of how we will be with God. And he will be with us. It says this. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death.

Or mourning. Or crying. Or pain. For the old order of things. Has passed away. I am making everything new.

And so. Blessed are you who weep now. For you will laugh. You will know. Unbridled joy. In the kingdom of God forever.

The final blessing statement. Blessed are you. When people hate you. When they exclude you. And insult you.

And reject your name as evil. Because of the son of man. Rejoice in that day. And leap for joy. Because great. Is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets.

[26 : 46] As followers of Jesus in this world. There is going to be occasions of all different kinds. When people treat us wrongly. Or poorly. Because of our devotion to Jesus.

And Jesus kind of gives us a small list. Of the various forms that may take. It might be hatred directed at you. It might be more subtle.

Done with actions only. And not words. Excluding you. Giving you the cold shoulder. Ignoring you. Passing over you.

When it comes time to promote. Or honor. Or award. And this is specifically. Because of the son of man. Because of our connection.

Our devotion to Jesus. So it's implied that they know. We are Christians. Our witness is overt. And clear enough.

[27 : 42] That they can see it. Maybe we were not willing to go along. With the plan of others. To cover something up. And do something. That was wrong. Maybe it's because.

Even a little thing. We asked them not to play. Music filled with obscenities. At the workplace.

Maybe it's because. We won't participate with them. In questionable activities.

Or conversation. Living as a follower of Jesus. Will inevitably bring us. Into conflict. Or at least. Mark us out. As different. To the people around us.

And we can expect. That we will be treated. Poorly. At times. Because of our allegiance. To Jesus. And his ways. Jesus tells us.

To rejoice. And leap. For joy. For joy. When that happens. Why? Because if that happens to us. Because of our faith in him.

[28 : 42] Great. Is your reward. In heaven. Not just. That you're going to get a reward. But great. Is your reward.

In heaven. Some of us have recently attended. The graduation of somebody. That we know and love. We sit back. We watch. We wait to see.

Who the awards. The scholarships. And the bursaries. Will be given to. We pay special attention.

To those who. Achieve the big awards. The governor general's award.

Or the big money scholarships. And we think about. What they must have done. To earn those.

Awards. How many evenings spent. Pouring over the books.

Rather than playing video games. Or. Out. Partying with friends. Well there is. For those of. Who. Us. Who are followers of Jesus.

[29 : 35] A day coming. When the rewards. Will be handed out. When we will be honored. And recognized. And for some. Their reward.

Will be. Great. They'll get the big. Awards. And Jesus says. The great reward. Goes to those. Who were treated poorly. Because of their faith.

In him. I don't know about you. But I'm looking forward. To that. Award ceremony. I think it'll be. A sweet moment. For all of us. Who are followers of Jesus.

A day when we applaud. When we celebrate. That great vindication. Of those who had it. The worst. In this life. Simply because. They treasured Jesus.

Above all. And so. If. You're being mocked. Or laughed at. Or excluded. Because of your faith.

[30 : 31] In Jesus. Or because of your commitment. To his ways. Know that you will be. Blessed. Greatly. By God. You will be rewarded.

And what a privilege. And an honor. You will see it to be. To have suffered mistreatment. For the king of kings. Jesus mentions about.

This is how. Their ancestors. Treated the prophets. Basically. He's saying. That if you suffer at all. In any way. From others. Because of your faith. In me.

You're in good company. That's how it's been. For a long time. How did the wicked. Treat Moses. They banded together. And opposed him. They didn't listen to him.

They spoke evil of him. How did they treat Elijah. And the prophets. In his day. King Ahab. And Queen Jezebel. Tried to hunt them down. And kill them all. Zachariah.

[31 : 32] Son of Jehoiada. Was stoned to death. By King Joash. When he confronted him. For disobeying the Lord. Micaiah was slapped. And thrown into jail. Jeremiah was threatened.

And beaten. And thrown into a cistern. And left to die. Each of these people. Was specially chosen by God. To speak his words. To the people.

And look at how they were treated. So if people in our world. Mistreat you. Know that you are in good company. Says Jesus. Well we've looked at the blessing statements.

But we should probably look at. The warning statements. The woe statements. There's a direct contrast here. We've looked at that.

These words are directed. To those who lack. Faith in Jesus. So Jesus is not saying. All who are rich. Or all who are well fed. Or happy. Or popular in this life.

[32 : 31] Will perish. He's not saying that. These are aimed at those. Who do not have true faith in Jesus. But have achieved. A measure of success. By the world's measure. Or it may even be that.

Their success is. One of the reasons. They don't think they need Jesus. Why do I need him? I have it made. I have everything I need. Jesus says.

Woe to you who are rich. For you have already received. Your comfort. He's saying. You may think you have it made. But without me.

The comforts you have right now. Are the last. And the only comforts you will know. Woe to you who are well fed now. For you will go hungry.

The great reversal is coming. The judgment is coming. And because you ignored me. Says Jesus. Your time to want. Your time to hunger.

[33 : 31] And to long. For the good things is coming. Woe to you who laugh now. For you will mourn. And weep. This of course does not mean.

That laughter is wrong. Or that we should always be sad. And mournful. But there's a kind of laughter. There's a kind of happiness. That fits mainly with the world. And what it values. And celebrates. The world celebrates. Earthly success. Great wealth. Or fame. It laughs at things that are evil.

Things that are even hurtful to others. There's also the mocking laugh. The laugh of scorn or ridicule. Aimed at others.

Out of pride. There's a happiness felt by the world. Which has no God. In it. But this kind of happiness and laughter.

[34 : 29] Will be turned. To weeping. And mourning. Says Jesus. Jesus spoke about hell. Quite a few times. The final destination of the wicked.

And he described it in this way. Matthew 13 verse 49. At the end of the age. The angels will come out. And separate the evil from the righteous. And throw them into the fiery furnace.

In that place. There will be weeping. And gnashing. Of teeth. When God's true and just judgment. Finally comes on the wicked. Those who have ignored. And refused. Jesus offer of salvation. Will experience. This intense mourning.

Sorrow. Regret. And dismay. God's judgment. At the end. Will cause. For the wicked. The ultimate devastation.

[35 : 32] And loss. And the last one. Woe to you. When everyone speaks well of you. For that is how their ancestors.

Treated the false prophets. We read of the false prophets. In the Old Testament. Whole groups of men. Claiming to speak for God. And behaving in strange ways.

To kind of give the idea. That God's spirit. Is right now. Speaking through me. And what were they doing? God says. They were just telling. Whoever consulted. With them.

What they wanted to hear. And they were accepting money. And gifts. For doing that too. They were like fortune tellers. Which almost always give.

Good news. And God denounced them. And said they speak lies. And they're making stuff up. And I never told them to say any of that. And so everyone loved these so-called.

[36 : 29] Prophets. Because they always told the people. What they wanted to hear. If everyone speaks well of you. And no one is offended.

Or put off with you. It's an indication. That you're on the wrong side. That you're on the side of the world. Rather than God.

That you're walking the way of the wicked. Rather than walking the way of Christ. Which normally results in conflict with the world. And opposition from the world.

To be in the company of the false prophets. Is not a good thing. They said God isn't angry with us. All is well between you and God. God is with you. He will bless you with victory. Meanwhile God was saying the exact opposite. Through his true prophets.

[37 : 25] So to be in the company of the false prophets. Is not a good thing. They were swept away. By God's judgment. Well these are powerful words.

Both the statements of blessing. And the statements of woe. They remind us that there are only two ways to live. Two paths. To take. There is the path.

Of blessing. And there is the path of woe. There is the path of becoming a true disciple of Jesus. And having your faith in him. Believing in him.

Following him. Listening to him. And then there is the path of going your own way. The way of the world. Seeking after the comforts.

The pleasure. The popularity. The stuff. Of the world. One path. The path. The path of Christ. May seem hard. Seems.

[38 : 23] To be filled with troubles. But it leads to the kingdom inheritance of ultimate joy. And satisfaction. And honor. That God has promised. The other path.

May seem easy. And comfortable now. But Jesus says. It leads to everlasting sorrow. And hunger. And loss. And so I want to just ask you.

End with this question. Have you decided to follow Jesus? If so. Be encouraged. However.

Life. Is going. It's going to get. Much better. When Jesus returns. The great reversal is coming. It's going to turn everything.

On its head. Have you decided. Not to follow Jesus? Be forewarned. You will lose.

[39 : 22] All that you cherish. And hold dear now. And you will get. What we all deserve. From God. For your sins. The great reversal.

Is coming. Let's pray. Father in heaven.

We thank you for these words. And we thank you that you. Spoke them to stir our hearts. And I pray that each one of our hearts. Would be stirred. That we would. See that choice before us.

And that we would choose. Faith in your son. Whom you sent. Because you love us. And you long.

To be with us forever. In your kingdom. Fill our hearts with that vision.

We ask that you would cause. The troubles in our life now. That are maybe overwhelming us. Or burdening in us. To just fade out of sight. And that we would see. Your kingdom. And all that is coming.

[40 : 25] And all that is coming. We thank you that you hold us. We thank you that you have promised. To carry us through. From now till the end. We commit ourselves to you.

In Jesus name. Amen.